

PERISCOPE

DELAYING THE U-2

The specially-equipped U-2 jets that the Administration hoped to use to monitor Soviet compliance with the new SALT agreement will not be ready to fly until the end of the year—too late to have much impact on the Senate debate over the treaty. The U-2s, trailing long wire antennas, will fly at 60,000 feet over the eastern edge of Turkey picking up Soviet missile launches from Tyuratam, 800 miles to the east. The Turks, anxious not to offend the Soviets, have not yet approved the overflights.

The new U-2s are more important politically than strategically. Even if the Turks give their OK, the flights would be superseded in mid-1980 by sophisticated new satellites. But to a Senate skeptical of U.S. ability to verify Soviet testing after the loss of American listening posts in Iran, the U-2 flights might be crucial to the success of the ratification debate. Unfortunately, Administration officials say it will take at least six months to equip the jets with the necessary verification technology.

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THE 'GHOUL SQUAD'

If the Kremlin was trying to reassure the U.S. about President Leonid Brezhnev's health by having him walk unassisted down a plane ramp in Budapest last week, the plan backfired. The CIA's "ghoul squad"—a group of doctors who evaluate foreign leaders from afar—took one look at the films of Brezhnev and diagnosed the President as being in the "old-man-shuffle stage." "The shuffle is characteristic of old men who are uncertain of their balance," said one analyst. Still, the CIA's experts acknowledge that the Soviet leader has bounced back from his series of winter illnesses—and should be able to meet with President Carter in Vienna later this month.